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Lagging skills

‘Lagging skills’ is a term used by child psychologist and educator, Ross Greene.

The term refers to the discrepancies between our capacities, and the expectations of us in our environment.

Notice that there is no assessment here of whether it might be **reasonable** to assume or require skillfulness in these areas, or whether the expectations being made of us are **reasonable**.

Ross Greene’s approach is that ‘improving’ lagging skills should never be the focus of our problem-solving, but that understanding these lagging skills allows us to come up with solutions that accommodate them.

Go through this list* of ‘lagging skills’ and tick any that you recognise from your own experience in the environments you inhabit (work, interests & hobbies, relationships, family, etc). Note any examples you can think of.

*Adapted from the [ALSUP 2020](#)

We will use this information when we look at setting priorities, and thinking about reducing demands and letting go of expectations that cannot realistically be met.

Lagging Skills

☐ **Difficulty maintaining focus**

Brain fog, dissociation, zoning out
Multidirectional and/or hyperactive thinking

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty handling transitions - shifts from one task or mindset to another**

Difficulty moving between 'work' and 'home' mode

Difficulty switching between different types of work

Difficulty ending or leaving meetings/conversations /events

(See a great cartoon [here](#))

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty with routine**

Great need for freedom or novelty

Urgency or intensity required in order to initiate tasks

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty with executive functioning**

Difficulty planning & organizing

Difficulty with spatial awareness and the physical environment

Time-blindness or difficulty managing time

Difficulty with sequencing (knowing what order to do things in)

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty considering the likely consequences or impacts of actions**

Impulsivity / compulsivity

Automatically saying yes (or no) to things

Low awareness of the space between stimulus and response

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty persisting with challenging or tedious tasks**

Work block

Demand avoidance

Procrastination

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty expressing concerns, needs or thoughts in words**

Social anxiety / difficulties speaking in public situations

Difficulty identifying and recognising emotional states

Tendencies to 'act out', dissociate or somatise

Difficulty with assertiveness, conflict and asking for help

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty managing frustration and other emotional responses**

'Seeing red'

Shutdown

Overwhelm

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Chronic irritability and/or anxiety that impedes creative problem solving**

Things feel impossible

Overwhelm

Exhaustion

Feelings of helplessness

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty with sensory environment**

Sensitivity to noise / light / temperature / smell / touch / crowdedness

Difficulties with hearing / vision

Discomfort with physical aspects of work / life

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty seeing 'greys' - concrete, literal, black & white thinking**

All or nothing mentality

Perfectionism

Difficulty changing one's mind

Difficulties being flexible or bending the rules

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to change a plan of action**

Difficulty revising a plan that felt 'done'

Difficulty with in-the-moment problem-solving

Difficulty processing new information 'on the fly'

Feeling challenged / undermined / out of control when a plan changes

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Inflexible, inaccurate interpretations ('everyone's out to get me' / 'I am unlikeable')**

Rigid worldviews and beliefs about the self

Tendencies to interpret events through the same 'filter' to confirm beliefs

Impostor syndrome

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty attending to or accurately interpreting social cues**

Social anxiety

Preferring direct and to-the-point communication

Difficulties interpreting body language and facial expressions

Persistent uncertainty / anxiety about where you stand in a relationship

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty entering conversations, joining groups, connecting with people**

Difficulties networking

Difficulties with public speaking / committees / group work / etc

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulties separating one's own emotional experience from others'**

Becoming very affected by others' distress

Taking on others' problems as one's own

Habitually taking on a 'rescuer' role

Assuming others feel like you do

Examples from your own life:

☐ **Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty**

Difficulty self-regulating when things are uncertain

Feeling lost without a plan

Examples from your own life:

Are there any other ‘lagging skills’ of a cognitive, interpersonal, or emotional variety that aren’t covered by the categories above?

List them here, with examples of how they affect you.